

The Flood

Blueprint for Reading

BACKGROUND BYTES

What is a flood? Floods are high water levels that cover normally dry land areas. Wherever there is a coast—of a lake, river, or stream—floods occur naturally and regularly. Lakes, rivers, and streams may flood, when there is a lot of rain over a long period of time, or when there is brief, intense rain during a storm.

Floods create wetlands. Wetlands are what used to be called swamps. Swamps were thought to be useless. But they are one of nature's building blocks. When the Mississippi River used to flood, it dumped millions of pounds of soil on the Mississippi delta, which was rich and fertile land. As the soil built up and became firm, a landmass was created. This landmass became the southern part of Louisiana.

Since floods can be destructive to man, we have tried to control them. We built dams and levees. A levee is a wall that is intended to keep the river out of your living room. And so, the U.S. Army Corps of engineers built 2,000 miles of levees along the Mississippi River. As the people of Louisiana has learned, controlling the Mississippi River has created a catastrophe for America. Without floods and the soil that they bring, the southern tip of Louisiana is drying out and falling into the Gulf of Mexico. Every year, a chunk of land the size of Manhattan turns to water in Louisiana. Vital American industries such as fishing, gas, and oil, are threatened.

INTO . . . *The Flood*

A wise man once said, "Nothing is so strong as gentleness; nothing so gentle as real strength." We usually do not think of being gentle with animals that have been taken out of the wild. Perhaps we should think about this. In *The Flood* we see the power of Ralph Helfer's affection training.

For Helfer to be kind and gentle, he must also be calm. During the emergency, he communicates this inner sense of calm to both the animals and other people.

In *The Flood*, Helfer experiences wave after wave of disastrous events. He is driven to keep trying, because of his respect and love for the animals. How many animals can he save? Helfer's experience reminds us that no matter what we do, trouble may still come. Times of crisis test and develop our inner resources.

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PRETEACHING ACTIVITY

Tell the students to find the vocabulary words at the bottom of the story pages. Then ask someone to pronounce the first word and read the definition. Have the students pronounce the word as a group. Repeat the steps for all vocabulary words. Now divide the students into four groups. Assign each group seven vocabulary words. Have each group write five sentences using a different vocabulary word in each sentence. **[Answers will vary.]** Now have the students fill in the blanks of these sentences with

appropriate vocabulary words:

1. After the tornado struck Bob's house, he found there was nothing left to _____. **[salvage (p. 482)]**
2. When Mary sprained her ankle, the pain was intense at first but eventually _____. **[subsided (p. 490)]**
3. After several minutes of applause, Tom _____ to the audience's request for another tune on the piano. **[succumbed (p. 487)]**
4. When the tourists lost sight of their guide, they were in great _____ about what to do next. **[turmoil (p. 485)]**

GETTING STARTED

As a brief introduction to Ralph Helfer's world of animals, do the following: ask your students to picture themselves riding atop a 15 foot giraffe or wrestling a 600 pound grizzly bear. Can they imagine themselves curled up beside a magnificent lion, their heads resting in its thick mane, both man and beast napping? Ask them to picture themselves as little children being lifted by an elephant's tail onto its back.

Instruct students to write down their reaction to these images. Could they actually picture themselves in these situations? If not, why not? If so, did they imagine it would be frightening, exciting, calming? Invite them to share their responses.

Next, tell them that all this and more was reality for the author of the piece they are about to read. The author's daughter grew up with lions, chimpanzees, orangutans, bears, etc. the way other children grow up with dogs and cats.

Explain that through a method of training the author developed, one that used affection and reward instead of fear and punishment, he became one of the most successful animal trainers ever. The "animal kingdom" he eventually built over many years housed 1,500 "beasts," but it was nearly destroyed by a flood in a matter of hours.

BACKGROUND BYTES

The information in the student text is intended to get the students thinking about the fact that floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and other "natural disasters" are truly natural events. They occur sometimes cyclically, sometimes rarely, but they are often necessary to our earth's growth and regeneration. Environmentalists study the effects of human civilization on natural phenomena, asking whether our way of life is having an effect on these natural occurrences. Are we, through the heat and pollution we emit, and through the resources we consume, causing some of these catastrophes?

Helfer does a complete job of explaining the nature of the flood that hit his ranch. Floods can occur almost anywhere in the world, and in any type of climate or terrain. Spring floods are most common in temperate regions as rain falls and snow melts. Floods in monsoon areas are somewhat easy to predict, while in other areas, they often cannot be predicted more than 24 hours in advance.

Humans have a tradition of stubbornly settling wherever we see fit, and then struggling to fend off the natural disasters that are endemic to those locations. To ward off floods, humans have built dams, levees, and bank reinforcements. We reinforce our buildings to be able to withstand earthquakes and tornadoes. We dig fire lines in the earth to prevent forest fires from spreading to nearby homes. Yet, nature often defeats us, and we are left to try to design and build even better defenses against the next catastrophe.

Ralph Helfer seems to have succeeded in taming the wild beast. However, in his book *The Beauty of the Beasts*, it is clear he does not see himself as any kind of conqueror. In fact, he marvels at the generosity of the animals for allowing him into their lives.

FOCUS

• Nonfiction Narrative

A **nonfiction narrative** tells the story of an actual event. Often a nonfiction narrative is just an outline of what happens. In this story, Ralph Helfer has written a suspenseful and detailed account. Reading this story, we are flooded with images: the sights, sounds, feel, and smell of the disaster.

• Language Arts Skill:

Cause and Effect

When an unusual event occurs and we want to tell others about it, it is often difficult to tell the story the way that it happened. What happened first? What happened next? Ralph Helfer has managed to do this very skillfully in *The Flood*.

When we write a narrative, we need to give the reader a clear sense of the way events unfolded. This helps the reader to see cause and effect relationships accurately. Our lives are filled with cause and effect situations. We go to bed early, and so we feel wide-awake in the morning. We rake the leaves, which makes our parents happy. In a cause and effect relationship, something happens, causing something else to happen. Remember that one effect may

well be the cause of yet another event.

The events in *The Flood* clearly have cause and effect relationships. Rain continues for weeks and almost causes the dam to burst. The floodgates are opened so that the dam will not burst. This sends a rush of water into the already saturated area. The floodwaters destroy buildings and cages and animal habitats. Heroic efforts to rescue the animals follow.

• About Setting

The story opens on Ralph Helfer's ranch, Africa U.S.A. The ranch is located in Soledad Canyon, 30 miles north of Los Angeles, beside the banks of the Santa Clarita stream. The ranch is home to 1,500 wild animals. This unusual setting is the source of suspense, excitement, and tragedy, as the canyon is flooded. Early in Helfer's narrative he writes that suddenly a rushing wall of water with large oak trees and sheds crashed into the compound. It uprooted cages and overturned buildings and trucks. This is a story in which setting is the basis for all the overwhelming events that occur.

The Flood

from *The Beauty of the Beasts* Ralph Helfer

It was raining that morning, as usual. For weeks it had been coming down—sometimes heavily, with thunder and lightning, and sometimes with just a mist of light rain. But it was always there, and by now the blankets, the beds, and the whole house were constantly damp.

My career was at a peak. I'd spent twelve years struggling to get to the top, and I had finally made it. My life was pretty good. I had just completed the back-to-back shooting of *Daktari* and *Gentle Ben*, and I was living at our new ranch, Africa U.S.A., with 1,500 wild animals and a crew of dedicated keepers and trainers.

He notes that the ability to work with wild animals is a gift, and that those who are most successful possess a kind of "aura" that the animals sense. He believes that animals sense a human's intent and disposition even before the human realizes how he or she is feeling. This can be supported by the fact that dogs, sensing fear, will give chase, but sensing openness and affection, wag their tails and lick one's hands or face.

Out of a sense of love and respect for animals, Helfer developed the technique of "affection training." He came up with the idea while in the hospital recovering from an attack by a 500 pound lion. He had been working with the lion, who was "fear trained." Helfer says, "he performed his tricks well enough, [but] he had no love for humans." He reasoned that "violence begets violence," and that the reverse logically would be true: affection would beget affection. Helfer equated the lion's reaction to him with the way battered children often grow up to be abusers. He claimed that the lion attacked not "because he was 'wild,' but because he was unloved."

Helfer has had great success with animals using this method and has won numerous awards. *The Flood* is a powerful testament to the remarkable results of affection training.

In *The Beauty of the Beasts*, Helfer outlines the four main ingredients of affection training, but not until he gives grave warning about the dan-

gers of raising wild animals. He stresses that not everyone has the ability to "communicate" well with animals. There are always dangers. If one does have the disposition for such work, however, the following are necessary for positive results: Love, Patience, Understanding, and Respect.

Love and caring are essential if an animal is to trust its owner. An owner must be completely dedicated to the animal for the duration of the animal's life, since the animal is totally dependent upon its owner. Touch is a way to express love, and the hand "should always be an extension of your love." The voice is another indicator of love and a positive way to control an animal's behavior.

Patience is necessary, for animals will often make mistakes. It helps to try to "tap into" the "timeless state" of existence in which animals reside to become as patient as you need to be.

Understanding comes from getting to know your animals and trying to "communicate" with them, to learn how they cope in stressful situations and determine their emotional needs. The trainer must be open to the animal's "wants, needs, and stresses," and to spend time with the animal. Eventually, Helfer says, you will understand and truly "know" your animals.

Respect develops as a result of love, patience, and understanding. Without respect, training will not be successful. As Helfer states, "While an animal that is physically abused will do as he's com-

manded, on the inside he's always looking for a moment to retaliate. Moreover, the animal doesn't respect the trainer, but the weapon the trainer uses on him." Affection training, on the other hand, produces an animal who "does as he's asked because he enjoys it, not because he's forced to." This fact becomes abundantly clear in *The Flood*.

INTO THE FLOOD

Many valuable lessons are learned from Ralph Helfer's experience. The most prominent theme that emerges is the power and strength of gentleness, or affection. As the raging waters flood Helfer's ranch and he and his crew struggle frantically to save his animals, he realizes that few could have been saved without affection training. Most of the animals on the ranch had been trained by this method. The animals in the "wild string" of his ranch, however, had been trained the traditional way by other trainers. These animals panicked when Helfer and his crew tried to release them from their cages and wouldn't respond to commands to come out. The other animals came willingly, and all but a couple made it to safety.

A beautiful account in the piece is of the outpouring of support Helfer received from neigh-

bors, friends, and even strangers. Throughout the chaos produced by the storm and the flooding, people found ways to bring food and drink to the Helpers and their crew, food for the animals, and help in taking some of the creatures, such as the snakes who would have otherwise died from cold, to safety. The generosity of these people speaks about the reality of human compassion and our ability to work together in times of trouble.

Yet, not all is rosy, for the flip side of human nature emerges when the car of one woman who came to help is broken into. Humans have great capacity for both good and evil. In this story, the good takes precedence.

Finally, a difficult, humbling, but enlightening life fact emerges in *The Flood*: all we hold dear and all we have worked for can instantly be taken from us. A short epilogue to the chapter *The Flood* in *The Beauty of the Beasts* not included in the textbook shows what Helfer had learned.

There was a time in my life when I felt I had reached the end of the rainbow. I had touched it, had dug my hand deep into its treasures of happiness and prosperity.

Suddenly, everything had changed. All that I had created was gone. I hadn't realized how vulnerable the world is, how delicate the balance of forces that sustain our existence...

We would have to start all over again.

Often with this kind of loss, people gain a new sense of priorities and perspective. A tremendous resilience also often emerges, represented by the exhausting days and nights of saving animals during the flood, and Helfer's steely words that they would, indeed, not lose the dream, but "start all over again."

FOCUS

Genre: Nonfiction Narrative

This, of course, is just one of many nonfiction pieces the students have read. It is perhaps, however, one of the most exciting. The content lends itself to suspense, drama, and excitement, made possible through Helfer's narration. All the elements of narration are present in this piece: imagery that speaks to the senses, structured plot, conflict, and the information necessary for readers to understand the impact of these events on the author's life. Perhaps the piece is all the more exciting because it is nonfiction. As the saying goes, "Truth is stranger than fiction." Encourage students who are writing their own narrative essays to think of their audience as they write. With what will their readers be familiar and what will require more background information? What is the conflict, and how can it be described so that readers become involved? What in that experience can be portrayed in such a way that the readers can "see, feel, hear, taste, and smell" the events?

Language Arts Skill: Creating a Simple Outline

Writing an outline is a wonderful way to prepare to write just such a narrative. Outlines help the students organize their thoughts, remember details, plan what will be included, and structure

their writing. Perhaps the easiest method to use is the simple outline with Roman numerals, letters, and numbers. Some students see their thoughts in action better with cluster outlines, while others might like to simply write a list without the formality of the traditional outline. Give the students the option of using whichever method works best for them. Or, since you know your students best, present the method you think would best suit your class.

Language Arts Skill: Cause and Effect

The concept of cause and effect can be applied at two levels of *The Flood*. At the first level, we see a "natural" cause and effect. Modern science is based on the notion that every effect has a cause; it is science's purpose to discover the cause of every effect and the effect of every cause in nature. In our story, the rain, the river, and the dam are the causes; the flood, the chaos, and the deaths are the effects. Both cause and effect are beyond human control.

At the second level, we see what we might call a "psychological" or "moral" cause and effect. The cause is the training given to the animals and the effect is their response. In the cases where affection training was used, where love and respect towards the animals was expressed, the responses of the animals were obedience, trust, and even helpfulness. Where fear training had been used, the effect was panic, disobedience, and death. In this set of "cause and effect," man *did* have a choice. He chose to relate to animals in a particular way and both he and the animals reaped the benefit of his choice.

Cause and effect is a powerful literary tool. Through causes and their effects, characters grow and change, conflict and tension mount, and plot moves forward. Lessons are learned and themes emerge. Often, cause and effect is just a background component in a story, since the recurring pattern of cause and effect is part of the fabric of life.

Question students on cause and effect relationships in some of the stories they have read. Ask them to distinguish between "causes" that are man-made and those that are beyond man's control. Discuss the idea that, even when both cause and effect are beyond man's control, his *response* to the effect (barring death) is within his control.

Environment as Antagonist

The flood is an entity or character in itself. It is an unrelenting, dangerous, life-taking character whom the protagonists fight.

The flood's swift movement sweeps away Helfer's beloved animals, and only when the waters recede, can the reader feel the relief of knowing the most beloved animals of all have survived.

About Setting

The setting of the ranch is a source of suspense, excitement, and relief. This unusual setting with all its wild animals produces a whole range of characters about whom the author and reader care. We're introduced to these remarkable creatures and worry along with the author and his crew about their fate.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- It was raining, as it had been for weeks.
- The author explains that he was at his peak professionally and living on a new ranch with 1,500 wild animals.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **1. Conflict foreshadowed; Cause and effect:** The heavy rain foreshadows the impending flood.
- ▶ **2. Tactile imagery:** The reader is given a sense of the extent of the rain.
- ▶ **3. Setting; Character introduction:** The ranch as setting and the protagonists, Helfer, animals, and crew, are introduced.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

- Q. What has been happening for weeks?**
A. It's been raining.

ANALYTICAL

- Q. What do you guess Helfer's profession is, and what clues are you given?**
A. He works in films ("shooting of *Daktari* and *Gentle Ben*") and trains animals ("living at our new ranch...with 1,500 wild animals and a crew of dedicated keepers and trainers").

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- The ranch is located in Soledad Canyon, 30 miles north of Los Angeles.
- The ranch, located near a stream, is fifteen miles below a flood-control dam.
- After checking with the city's flood-control office, the Helfers spend \$100,000 to build a channel that will protect against flooding.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **4. Foreshadowing:** The stream will soon swell and begin to flood the area.
- ▶ **5. Irony:** The dam had given them a false sense of security.
- ▶ **6. Irony; Theme:** After spending all that money to build a channel, they were still flooded. Try as we might, we cannot always protect ourselves.
- ▶ **7. Theme:** The “wild string” serve as a control group representing fear training, against which the effectiveness of affection training can be measured.
- ▶ **8. Characterization:** A major quality and driving force of the Helfers.
- ▶ **9. Character introduction:** These are some of the animals with whom the reader's emotions will become invested.
- ▶ **10. Rising action:** The first sign, outside of the weeks of rain, that flooding is imminent.

- The morning of the flood, after a few hours sleep, Toni, Helfer's wife, goes to check on the “wild string,” a section of the ranch with animals donated by abusive owners.
- The couple had taken in the wild animals

- even though the chances of training them with “affection training” were slim.
- When Helfer checks on the rhinos, he notices he cannot jump over the stream beside their barn because it has widened.

4 The ranch was beautiful. Nestled at the bottom of Soledad Canyon,¹ about thirty miles north of Los Angeles, the property snaked for a mile down the canyon beside the banks of the Santa Clarita² stream. The highway wound above it on one side, the railroad track on the other.

We'd had heavy rains before, and even a few floods, but nothing we couldn't handle. There was a flood-control dam above us, fifteen miles up the canyon, and we weren't too worried about the stream's overflowing. But just to make sure, we had asked the city's flood-control office to advise us. They checked their records for the biggest flood in the office's hundred-year history, and calculated that to handle one that size we would need a channel 100 feet wide, 12 feet deep, and 1 mile long. It cost us \$100,000 and three months of hard work, but we built it. It was worth it to feel safe.

Toni and I had grabbed a few hours' sleep before leaving the house, which was located off the ranch up on a hill, and heading out into the rain again early this morning to make sure our animals were dry and safe.

7 On arriving at the compound, Toni went over to check on the “wild string,” a group of lions, tigers, bears, and leopards that had been donated to us by people who never should have had them in the first

8 place. Hopeless animal lovers that we were, we had taken them in, even though we know that very few spoiled mature animals could ever be indoctrinated with affection training.³

I checked at the office for messages, then headed for “Beverly Hills,” our nickname for the area where our movie-star animals lived—Gentle Ben, Clarence the cross-eyed lion, Judy the chimp, Bullfrog the “talking” buffalo, Modoc the elephant, and many others. The rain had become a steady downpour by the time I arrived there. Everything seemed to be in order, so I went on to the rhinos. No problems there, either.

10 As I left the rhinos, I noticed that I could no longer jump over the stream that ran beside their barn. I was starting to get a little concerned. The sky was now opening up with a vengeance.⁴ I wrapped my poncho around me and continued my tour of inspection.⁵

I was wondering how Toni was making out with the wild string when

1. *Soledad Canyon* (SO leh dad KAN yun)
2. *Santa Clarita* (SAN tuh kluh REE tuh)

3. *Affection training* is a technique for training animals that uses a system of love, patience, and rewards rather than force and physical threats or punishment.

4. Something *done with a vengeance* (VEN juntz) is done with great force or violence.

5. Someone who walks through an area to evaluate the situation is taking a *tour of inspection*.

WORD BANK

nestled (NES uld) *v.*: lying close and snug; located in a sheltered spot
compound (KOM pound) *n.*: a separate area, usually fenced or walled, containing residences, business offices, barracks, or other structures

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GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Why does Helfer feel they won't be affected by a flood?

A. He believes the flood-control dam will protect them. They also built a huge channel for added protection.

Q. What does the “wild string” consist of?

A. Animals that were donated by people who either did not know or did not want to know how to properly care for them.

Q. What is the “Beverly Hills” area of the ranch?

A. This is where the most famous of Helfer's animals are housed.

Q. Why does Helfer become “a little concerned”?

A. The stream has gotten so high he can't jump over it.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Knowing that a flood is imminent, what can we say about Helfer's feelings of security at this point?

A. They are unfounded. All his efforts are going to be futile.

Q. What does Helfer mean by “the sky was now opening with a vengeance”?

A. He means that the rains are extremely heavy.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Helfer's head trainer tells him that the canyon dam is about to burst and that the flood-control people would be opening flood-gates to release the pressure, meaning heavy water pouring into the stream.
- Suddenly a rushing wall of water with large oak trees and sheds crashes into the compound as Helfer and his crew check on the animals.
- The cages begin to come loose from the force and depth of the water, and the animals panic.

Miguel,⁶ a Mexican keeper who had been with us for six years, arrived to care for the animals in the Beverly Hills section. **11** He smiled his broad, gold-capped grin, then disappeared around a bend of the stream.

Then my head trainer, Frank Lamping, arrived. He told me that the **12** **13** earthen dam above us was about to go. To prevent the dam from bursting, the flood-control people were opening the floodgates to release the pressure. We were to watch out for some heavy water coming downstream.

14 The crew had all been working continuously from morning until night since the rains had begun, to make sure that the ranch was safe. Now we had to redouble our efforts.

I told Frank to check the stock area.⁷

A trainer yelled from the roadway above that he had the nursery section under control.

I found some pretty badly undermined cages in my area and set to work with a shovel to fill the erosion. I was looking down at my shovel, working hard, when I heard a

15 noise. It was a low roar, and it was quickly becoming louder and closer. I remember

just looking over my shoulder, and suddenly there it was—a wall of water **16** carrying with it full-sized oak trees, sheds, branches. Down it came, crashing and exploding against the compound, uprooting cages, overturning buildings, trucks—anything in its way.

Instantly, everything was in chaos. Sheer panic broke out among the animals in the Beverly Hills section. **17** Lions were roaring and hitting against the sides of their cages; bears were lunging against the bars; chimps were screaming. The water was starting to rock the cages. Some were already floating and were about to be swept downstream.

I didn't know what to do first! I raced for the cages, but was **18** thrown down by the

6. Miguel (me GELL)

7. Cattle and horses, or livestock, are kept in the stock area.



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WORD BANK

erosion (ih RO zhen) *n.*: a hole caused by the gradual wearing away of something, such as soil, land, etc.
chaos (KAY oss) *n.*: state of utter confusion and disorder
lunging (LUNJ ing) *v.*: moving forward suddenly; plunging; rushing

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **11. Characterization; Visual imagery:** Miguel is shown as congenial.
- ▶ **12. Conflict; Plot:** Tension builds and the plot progresses with this revelation.
- ▶ **13. Cause and effect; Irony:** The opening of the floodgates causes the terrible rush of water that floods the ranch. By trying to prevent one catastrophe, they create another.
- ▶ **14. Characterization:** The dedication of the crew is shown.
- ▶ **15. Auditory imagery:** Readers “hear” the sound of the flood.
- ▶ **16. Visual imagery:** Dramatic visual image of what a flood looks like.
- ▶ **17. Auditory imagery:** These images highlight the panic and fear of the animals.
- ▶ **18. Visual imagery:** The water's force is apparent in this image.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. What have the flood-control people warned Helfer to watch for and why?

A. They are to watch for heavy water coming downstream because they have opened flood-gates to release pressure in the dam.

Q. What effect does the wall of water have on the animals?

A. They panic and roar, scream, and hit themselves against their cages.

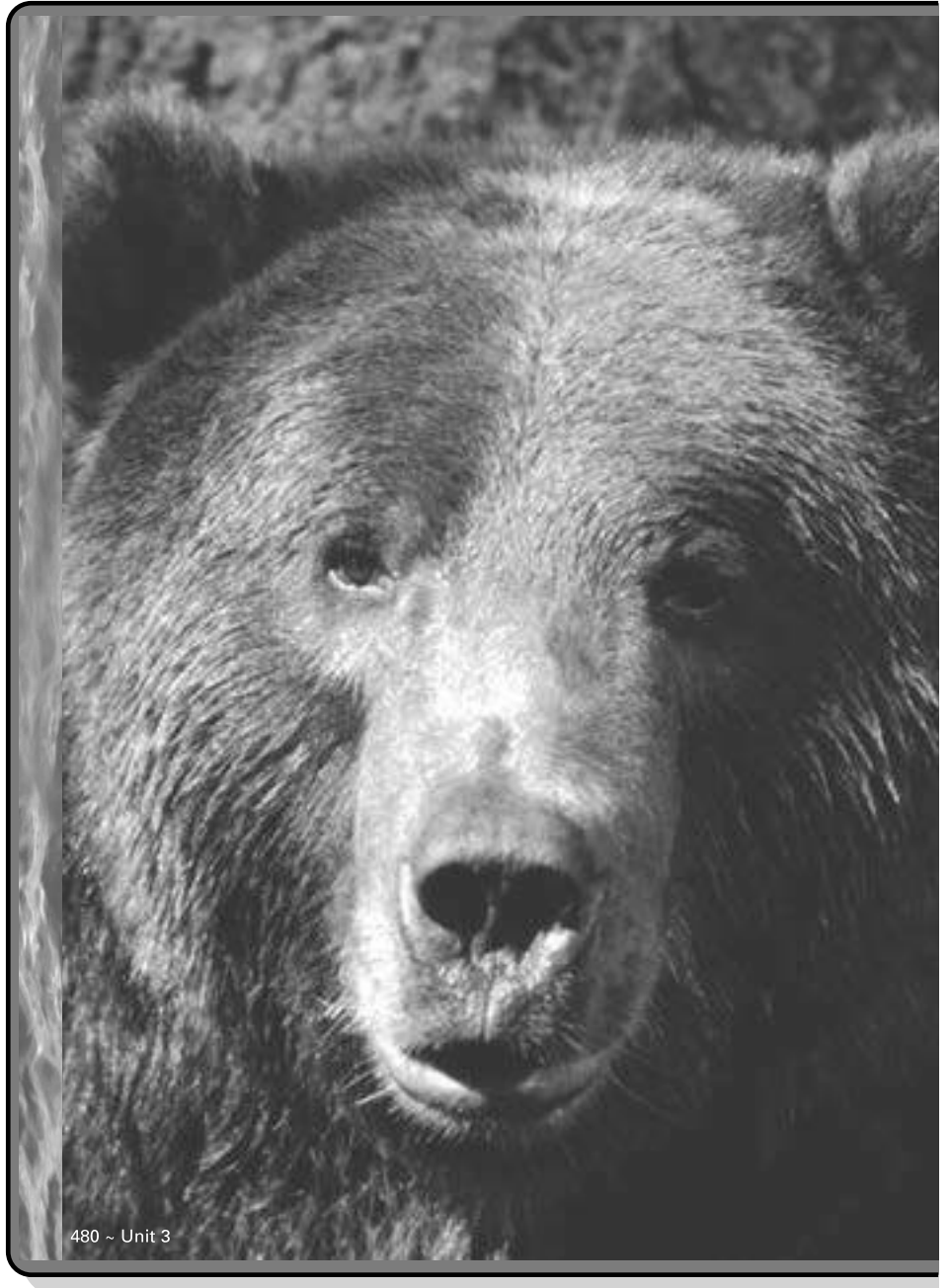
ANALYTICAL

Q. What can we assume about Miguel from the image of “his broad, gold-capped grin”?

A. Students may give a couple different answers: that he is good-natured or that he is from a foreign country, where gold is commonly used to fix teeth.

Q. What do you imagine Helfer felt as he saw the wall of water crashing toward him?

A. He must be terrified because it isn't just water, which would be scary enough, but trees and structures as well.



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SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Helfer, with the help of Miguel, an animal keeper, ties a rope around him to reach the cages over the water and set the animals free.
- He reaches Gentle Ben's, the bear's, cage first, then hangs on to the bear as they are swept by the water toward other cages.
- As he reaches the other cages, he lets go of Ben and watches as the bear is swept out of view on the current of water.
- More and more animals are set free to fend for themselves in the water rather than drown trapped in the cages.

weight of the water, Miguel came running over, yelling half in English and half in Spanish. I told him to grab a large coil of rope that was hanging in a tree nearby. I fastened it around me and, with Miguel holding the other end, I started out into the water. **19** If I could just get to the cages, I could unlock them and set the animals free. At least then they could fend for themselves. It was their only chance. Otherwise, they would all drown in their cages.

The water was rushing past me furiously. I struggled through it to Gentle Ben's cage, fumbling for the key. "Don't drop it!" I mumbled to myself. The key turned, I threw open the door, and the great old bear landed right on top of me in his panic for freedom.

20 I grabbed Ben's heavy coat and hung on as his massive body carried me to a group of cages holding more than twenty animals. The water was now five or six feet deep. Cages were starting to come loose from their foundations; the animals were swimming inside them, fighting for breath. I let go of Ben and grabbed onto the steel bars of one of the cages. My heart sank as I saw Ben dog-paddling, trying to reach the embankment. He never did. **21** I could just barely make out his form as he was carried through some rough white water and around a bend before he was lost from view.

One by one I released the animals—leopards, tigers, bears—talking as calmly as I could, even managing an occasional pat or kiss of farewell. I watched as they were carried away, swept along with the torrent of water. **22** Some would come together for a moment and would then be whisked away, as though a giant hand had come up and shoved them. Some went under. I strained to see whether any of these came up again, but I couldn't tell.

23 My wonderful, beloved animals were all fighting for their lives. I felt sick and helpless.

To my right, about thirty feet out in the water and half submerged, was a large, heavy steel cage on wheels with a row of four compartments in it. I managed to get to it just as the force of the current started to move it. I began to open the compartments, one by one, but now the cage was moving faster downstream, carrying me with it. I looked back to the shore, at Miguel. He saw the problem, and with his end of the rope he threw a dally⁸ around a large tree branch. We were running out of time. **24** If the rope came to the end of its slack before I could get it off me and onto the cage, we would lose the cage. It was picking up speed, and the animals inside were roaring and barking in terror.

I decided to hold the cage myself,

8. A dally is a lasso or a rope.

WORD BANK

embankment (im BANK munt) *n.*: a long bank or mound to hold back water
torrent (TOR unt) *n.*: a stream of water flowing rapidly and violently

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LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **19. Suspense:** The animals' lives depend upon his being able to reach the cages.
- ▶ **20. Visual and tactile imagery:** This image illustrates the close relationship between Helfer and his animals.
- ▶ **21. Suspense:** Reader must wait to find out Ben's fate.
- ▶ **22. Visual imagery:** This image is almost a simile—the water like a giant hand.
- ▶ **23. Suspense; Characterization:** Again, the fate of the animals unknown. Helfer's love for his animals is apparent in his reaction.
- ▶ **24. Suspense:** Suspense is built with the gravity of the situation and the sounds of the animals' fear.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. What are Helfer and Miguel struggling to do with the rope?

A. They are trying to reach the cages to let the animals free, and the rope is holding Helfer so that he doesn't get swept away in the water.

Q. Who is released first?

A. Gentle Ben.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Why is it so important for Helfer to reach the cages and release the animals?

A. If he doesn't let them out of the cages, they'll drown as the cages sink or get tossed in the water. If released, they can at least swim.

Q. What can we tell about Helfer and Gentle Ben's relationship as we see the two floating on the water together?

A. They must really trust each other, for the bear doesn't care that Helfer is riding on him.

Q. What is the greatest source of suspense at this point in the story?

A. Whether his animals will survive the flood.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

● Helfer is unable to release two beloved wolves, Sheba and Rona, from their cage, and his tears mingle with the rain water as he watches the cage carried out of sight.

● Helfer realizes the flooding was caused by the release of water from the dam onto rain-soaked land combined with a new storm that has dropped 14 inches of rain in 24 hours.

● The flood was larger than any recorded in the last hundred years, and the Helfers and their crew struggled for two days and nights to salvage what they could of their ranch.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

▶ **25. Characters:** Two more of Helfer's special animals introduced.

▶ **26. Drama; Characterization:** The anguish Helfer feels at dropping the key adds deep emotion to the story and gives depth to his character.

▶ **27. Alliteration:** This expression is so effective it's become a cliché.

▶ **28. Cause and effect:** The cause of the flood is explained.

▶ **29. Plot; Conflict:** This information stresses the extent of this flood.

▶ **30. Cause and effect:** More explanation of the reason for the massive flooding.

▶ **31. Alliteration; Simile:** This figurative speech highlights the flood's force.

▶ **32. Characterization; Theme:** The characters' strength, persistence, and resilience are revealed.

with the rope tied around my waist. There were two beautiful wolves in the last cage,

25 Sheba and Rona. Toni and I had raised them since they were pups. I was at their door, fumbling with the lock, when the rope went taut. I thought it would cut me in half. I grabbed the steel bars with both hands, leaving the key in the lock, praying it wouldn't drop out. When I reached down **26** once more to open the lock, the key fell into the water! I was stunned, frozen. I knew I had just signed those animals' death warrants. The water behind the cage was building up a wall of force. I held on as tightly as I could, but finally the cage was ripped out of my hands.

I fell backward into the churning water; when I surfaced, I could see the cage out in the mainstream, racing with the trees, bushes, and sides of buildings,

27 heading on down the raging river. I looked for the last time at Sheba and Rona. They were looking at us quietly as if they knew, but their eyes begged for help. My tears joined the flood as my beloved friends were washed away.

By this time it had become clear to **28** me what had happened. The floodgates on the dam had been opened, all right, but because the ground was already saturated with the thirty inches of rain that had fallen

in the last few weeks, it wouldn't absorb any more. At the same time, the new storm had hit, pouring down another fourteen inches in just twenty-four hours. Together, these conditions had caused the flood.

It was a larger flood than any that had been recorded in the area in the last hundred years, and it was made worse because the water had been held up occasionally on its fifteen-mile journey down the canyon by debris in its path. When suddenly released, the water that had built up behind the naturally formed logjams⁹ doubled in force. By the time it reached us, huge waves had been built up: The water and debris came crashing down on us like a wall, then subsided, only to come crashing down again. We were to struggle through two days and nights of unbelievable havoc and terror, trying desperately to salvage what we could of the ranch.

The storm grew worse. Heavy sheets of rain filled and overflowed our flood channel, undermining its sides until they caved in. By midmorning the Santa Clarita had become a raging, murderous torrent, 150 feet wide and 15 feet deep, moving

9. A *logjam* (LOG jam) is a pileup or tangle of logs in a river that keeps the water from flowing freely.

WORD BANK

fumbling (FUM bling) *v.*: feeling or groping about clumsily

saturated (SATCH uh RAYT ed) *v.*: thoroughly soaked with moisture

debris (dih BREE) *n.*: the remains of anything destroyed; ruins; rubble

havoc (HAV uk) *n.*: devastation and destruction; confusion and disorder

salvage (SAL vij) *v.*: save from destruction or danger

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GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Who is Helfer trying to save when the key to the cage lock falls in the water?

A. Sheba and Rona.

Q. What does Helfer say caused the flood on his property?

A. The ground was too saturated with water to absorb the rushing waters from the floodgates, and a new storm erupted, pouring down fourteen more inches of water in twenty-four hours.

Q. How long did they struggle in the flood?

A. Two days and two nights.

Q. How large did the stream that Helfer could normally step over grow?

A. It grew to be 150 feet wide and 15 feet deep.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Why might it have been especially heartbreaking for Helfer when he lost Sheba and Rona?

A. He and his wife had raised them from pups.

Q. Why didn't the information from the flood-control people help the Helfers prepare for the flood?

A. The figures were based on floods that had occurred over the last hundred years. This flood was larger than any of those.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- The sides of the channel they had just built collapsed from the heavy rains.
- Buildings and trees on the ranch are uprooted and swept away and the two-lane highway is covered. All the while, the crew struggles to release as many animals as possible.

33 through Africa U.S.A. with the speed and force of an express train. In its fury it wiped out a two-lane highway, full-grown oak trees, generator buildings¹⁰—everything. Our sound stage was in a full-sized building, 100 feet long by 50 feet wide, but

34 the water just picked it up like a matchbox and carried it away downstream, end over end, rolling it like a toy and depositing it on a sand embankment a mile away. Electric wires flared brightly as the water hit them. We rushed for the main switch to the sound stage, shutting everything down for fear of someone being electrocuted. Everywhere, animals and people were in the water, swimming for safety.

We'd be half drowned, and then we'd make our way to the shore, cough and sputter, and go

35 back into the water. You don't think at a time like that—you do. My people risked their lives

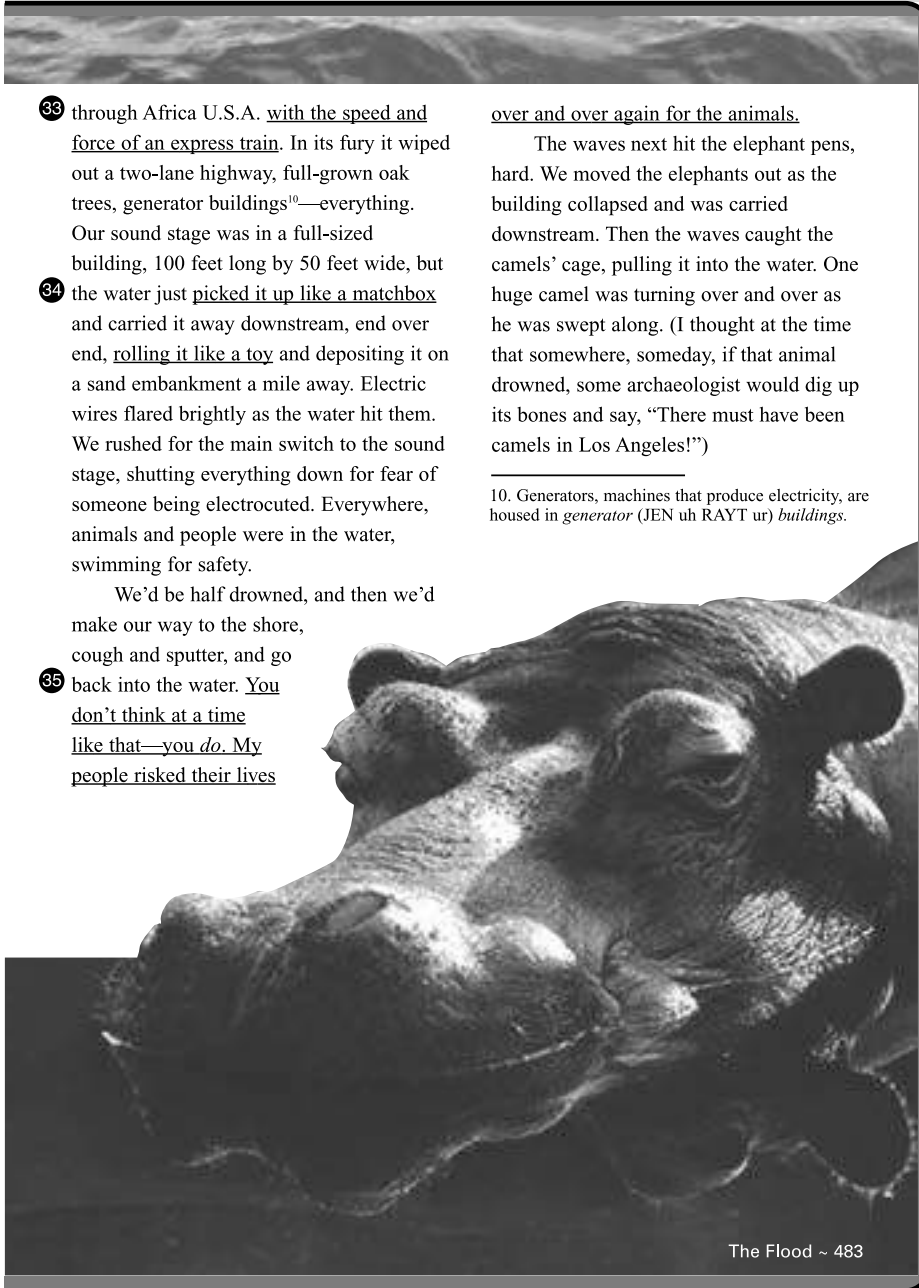
over and over again for the animals.

The waves next hit the elephant pens, hard. We moved the elephants out as the building collapsed and was carried downstream. Then the waves caught the camels' cage, pulling it into the water. One huge camel was turning over and over as he was swept along. (I thought at the time that somewhere, someday, if that animal drowned, some archaeologist would dig up its bones and say, "There must have been camels in Los Angeles!")

10. Generators, machines that produce electricity, are housed in *generator* (JEN uh RAYT ur) *buildings*.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **33. Visual imagery:** Stresses the force of the flood.
- ▶ **34. Simile:** The two similes express the utter helplessness of a frail human being in the face of the awesome power of nature.
- ▶ **35. Theme:** If man's heart is in the right place and he has the courage to carry out his will, he is not so helpless after all.



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GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. What does Helfer say people do during a true emergency?

A. He says, "You don't think at a time like that—you do."

ANALYTICAL

Q. What are some of the similes Helfer uses to describe the force of the water?

A. "the speed and force of an express train"; "picked it up like a matchbox"; "rolling it like a toy."

Q. What can we learn from the fact that people risked their lives to save the animals?

A. They must really love the animals and are loyal to Ralph Helfer.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Helfer gives instances where specific animals help him to safety while he helps them, and all help one another without any “kill” instinct.
- Helfer and Bob, the lion trainer, just barely rescue Clarence the lion, and are almost electrocuted by wires in the process.
- While rain, thunder, and lightning continue, animal trainer Frank almost drowns trying to save a group of monkeys.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **36. Excitement:** The sense of chaos lends tension and excitement to the scene.
- ▶ **37. Characterization; Theme:** This image attests to the way Helfer has with his animals.
- ▶ **38. Characterization; Theme:** Another example of Helfer’s relationship with his animals. A striking image.
- ▶ **39. Excitement:** More excitement as they are almost electrocuted.
- ▶ **40. Characterization:** Frank’s loyalty and love of animals is shown.

We worked frenziedly. Bears, lions, and tigers were jumping out of their cages and immediately being swept downstream. Others were hanging onto our legs and pulling us under, or we were hanging onto them and swimming for shore. I unlocked the cheetah’s cage and he sprang out over my head, right into the water, and was

36 gone. Animals were everywhere.

I remember grabbing hold of a mature **37** tiger as he came out of his cage. He carried me on his back to temporary security on the opposite bank as smoothly as if we’d rehearsed it.

Another time I found myself being carried downstream with Zamba, Jr., who was caught in the same whirlpool that I **38** was. I grabbed his mane, and together we swam for the safety of the shore. After resting a bit, I managed to get back to the main area, leaving the lion in as good a spot as any. At least for the moment he was safe.

As the storm rode on, the river was full of animals and people swimming together; there was no “kill” instinct in operation, only that of survival. Men were grabbing fistfuls of fur, clinging for life. A monkey grabbed a lion’s tail, which allowed him to make it to safety.

Clarence the cross-eyed lion was in a state of panic. The river had surrounded him and was now flooding his cage. His

trainer, Bob, waded across the water, put a chain on Clarence, took him out of his cage, and attempted to jump across the raging stream with him. But the lion wouldn’t jump. The water was rising rapidly. Bob threw part of the chain to me. To gain some leverage,¹¹ I grabbed a pipe that was running alongside a building. As we both pulled, Clarence finally jumped, and just then the pipe I was holding onto came loose. It turned out to be a “hot” electric conduit, for when Clarence leaped and the pipe came loose, we all got a tremendous electric shock! **39** Fortunately, the pipe also pulled the wires loose, so the shock only lasted for an instant. Had it continued, it would certainly have killed us, as we were standing knee-deep in water.

We noticed a group of monkeys trapped in a small outcropping¹² of dirt and debris in the middle of the river. Frank almost died trying to save them; **40** He tied a rope around his waist and started across, but about halfway over he slipped and went under. We didn’t know whether to pull on the rope or not. We finally saw him in

11. To gain *leverage* (LEV uh rij) is to gain some advantage over a competitor or over a difficult situation.

12. An *outcropping* is a small part of a riverbed which, because it has been heaped with dirt and branches, now shows above the surface of the river.

WORD BANK

frenziedly (FREN zeed lee) *adv.*: wildly; excitedly; frantically

raging (RAYJ ing) *adj.*: rushing; surging furiously

conduit (KON doo it) *n.*: a pipe, tube, or natural channel for conveying water or other fluids; a pipe used to run electrical wires

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GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. What is one way that Helfer makes it safely to shore after releasing animals from their cages?

A. He rides on the backs of the big cats.

Q. How were Helfer, Bob, and the lion in danger when they saved Clarence?

A. Helfer was holding onto a pipe that contained “hot” wires, which gave them all an electric shock. If it hadn’t been pulled loose, they would have died.

Q. How did Frank almost die trying to save the monkeys?

A. The rope he had tied around his waist had gotten tangled around his foot. Those on the shore who were holding on to the rope kept pulling him under the water every time they tried to pull the rope to save him.

ANALYTICAL

Q. What do you think accounts for the fact that the animals didn’t have “kill” instincts during this crisis?

A. Answers will vary. Some may say that they were actually too scared and were just worried about surviving. Others may say they had been trained so well and were so trusting, that the instinct didn’t emerge.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Helfer attributes the animals' cooperative behavior to "affection training."

midstream, trying to stay afloat. Whenever we pulled on the rope, he would go under.

41 (We found out later that the rope had become tangled around his foot, and every time we yanked it, we were pulling him under!) But he made it, thank G-d, and he was able to swim the animals to safety.

42 We were racing against time. The river was still rising, piling up roots and

buildings and pushing them along in front, forming a wall of destruction. The shouts of half-drowned men and the screams of drowning animals filled the air, along with thunder and lightning and the ever-increasing downpour of rain.

Throughout the turmoil and strife one thing was crystal clear to me, and that is that without affection training, all would have been lost. It was extraordinary. As dangerous and frightening as the emergency was, these animals remained calm enough to let themselves be led to safety when it was possible for us to do so.

Imagine yourself in a raging storm, with buildings crashing alongside of you. You make your way to a cage that houses a lion or a tiger, and the animal immediately understands why you're there and is happy to see you. You open the door, put a leash on the animal, and you both jump out into the freezing, swirling water. Together, you're swept down the stream, hitting logs, rolling over and over, as you try to keep your arms around the animal. Together, you get up onto the safety of dry land. You dry off, give your animal a big hug, and then go back in for another one.

There was one big cage left in the back section containing a lion. This lion was a killer who had been fear-trained rather than affection-trained. We went out

WORD BANK **turmoil** (TUR moy il) *n.*: state of great commotion, confusion, or disturbance
strife (STRYF) *n.*: violent or bitter conflict; (*archaic*, as used here) strenuous effort

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LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **41. Suspense; Excitement:** Their efforts are harming Frank.
- ▶ **42. Conflict:** The underlying conflict of the flood.
- ▶ **43. Theme:** Helfer's statement and description that follow attest to the strength of gentleness.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. To what does Helfer attribute their success at saving so many animals?

A. To affection training.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Which images illustrate best the terror the flood caused?

A. Answers will vary.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- A lion who has been fear trained is too afraid to come out of his cage, and other animals in the “wild string” who have been similarly trained have to be shot with tranquilizers and carried to safety, although not all are saved.
- Modoc, a one-eyed former circus elephant, helps by hauling many cages to dry ground.
- Helfer and his crew, as well as the animals they are able to bring to higher ground, are stranded on an “island” of dry land.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **44. Theme:** These animals’ fates are hindered by the fear-training they received.
- ▶ **45. Theme:** Helfer and crew’s powerful attachment to the animals makes them indefatigable.
- ▶ **46. Characterization; Theme:** Modoc the elephant is seen in action. If she hadn’t been affection trained, would she have helped?
- ▶ **47. Imagery:** Highlights Modoc’s strength.

to him. The other lions were being saved because we could swim with them, but this fellow was too rough. I got to the cage and opened the door. A couple of my men threw ropes on the lion and pulled, trying to get him out of his potential grave—but he wouldn’t come out. He was petrified! We pulled and struggled and fought to get him out of the cage, but we couldn’t do it, and we finally had to let him go.

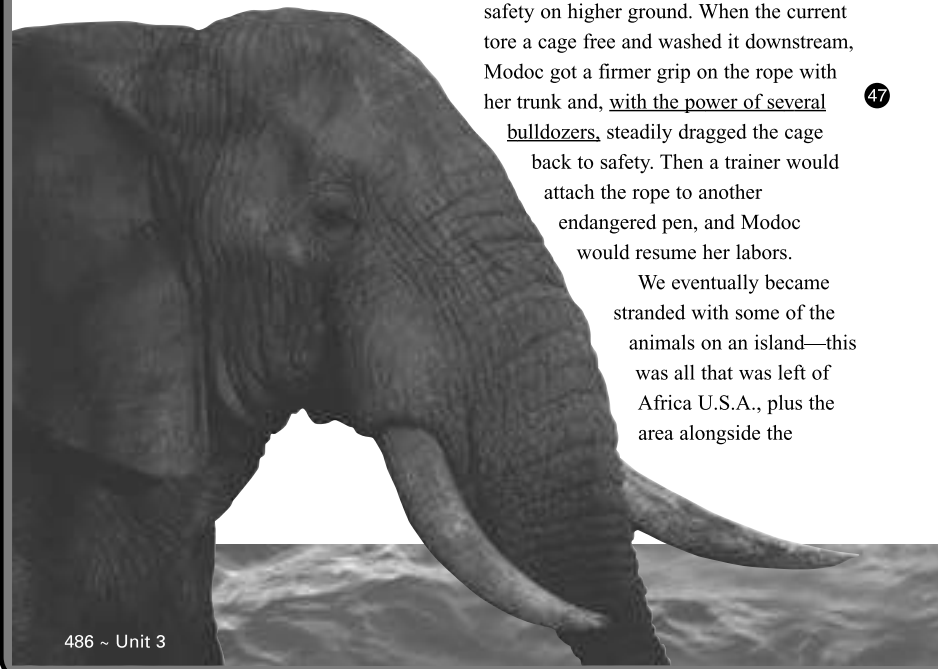
Then the “wild string” panicked, and in their hysteria they attacked their rescuers as if they were enemies. In the end, we had to resort to tranquilizer guns. We fired darts into each fear-trained animal, and as they succumbed to the medication, we held their bodies up above the water and carried

them to safety. Tragically, there was not enough time to drag all of them to safety; several drowned in their drugged sleep before we could reach them. 44

The storm continued on into the night, and with the darkness came a nightmare of confusion. We worked on without sleep, sustained by coffee and desperation. 45

During that first night, it became clear that ancient Modoc, the elephant, the one-eyed wonder of the big top, had by no means outlived her capacity for calmness and courage in the face of disaster. Modoc took over, understanding fully what was at stake and what was required of her. Animal after animal was saved as she labored at the water’s edge, hauling their cages to safety on higher ground. When the current tore a cage free and washed it downstream, Modoc got a firmer grip on the rope with her trunk and, with the power of several bulldozers, steadily dragged the cage back to safety. Then a trainer would attach the rope to another endangered pen, and Modoc would resume her labors. 46

We eventually became stranded with some of the animals on an island—this was all that was left of Africa U.S.A., plus the area alongside the



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GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Which animals did they have the most difficult time saving?

A. Those in the “wild string” who hadn’t been affection trained.

ANALYTICAL

Q. Describe the difference between the animals who had been affection trained and those who hadn’t.

A. The ones who had been affection trained were actually happy to see Helfer and his crew when they came to open their cages. They are like pets running to their owners. The other animals just stayed in a state of panic and wouldn’t budge. To get them to safety, they had to shoot them with tranquilizers.

Q. Helfer says that Modoc fully understood what was at stake and what was required of her. Do you think this is true? In your opinion, how much is an animal capable of understanding?

A. Answers will vary.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Bullfrog, the water buffalo, is missing.
- Over the next two days, people living in the area and other friends begin to help by providing food and radio communication.

railroad track. When the dam had burst upstream, the wall of water that hit the ranch divided into two fast-moving rivers. As time passed, the rivers widened and deepened until they were impossible to

- 48 cross. As dusk fell on the second day, we realized that we were cut off from the mainland. Since it was the highest ground on the ranch, the island in the center had
- 49 become the haven for all the survivors. The office building, the vehicles, and about twenty cages were all well above the flooded zone and so were safe for the time being. The giraffes, some monkeys, and one lion were all housed in makeshift cages on the island. We all hoped the water would not rise any further.

Behind the office building ran a railroad track. By following the tracks for three miles, it would be possible to reach the highway. The problem would then be in crossing the torrent of water to get to the road.

I noticed that Bullfrog, our thousand-pound Indian buffalo, was gone. Buffaloes are known to be excellent swimmers.

- 50 Surely *he* could survive! I asked around to see whether anyone had seen him. No one had. Bullfrog's cage had been at the entrance to the ranch, because he always greeted visitors with the most unusual bellow that sounded exactly like the word

"Hi." Now he was gone, too. Would it ever end? I felt weak. The temperature had dropped, and the wind had come up. The windchill factor was now thirty degrees below zero.

There's something horrible about tragedy that occurs in the dark. I could hear the water running behind me, and every once in a while I'd hear a big timber¹³ go, or an animal cry, or a person shouting. It all seemed very unreal.

Throughout the night and all the next day the rain continued, and we worked on. Luckily, help came from everywhere. The highway, which we could no longer get to but which we could see, was lined with cars. Some people had successfully rigged up a bo's'n chair¹⁴ 50 feet in the air and were sending hot food and drink over to us, a distance of some 200 yards. Other people were walking three miles over the hills to bring supplies. Radio communication was set up by a citizens'-band club. Gardner McKay, the actor and a true friend, put his Mercedes on the track, deflated the tires, and slowly drove down to help us. One elderly woman prepared meat and coffee

13. The word "timber" can mean either wood or the tree itself. In this case, a *big timber* (TIM bur) is a big tree.

14. A *bo's'n chair* (BOSE un CHAIR) is a worker's wooden or canvas chair that is hung by ropes over the side of a ship or building.

WORD BANK

potential (puh TEN chul) *adj.*: capable of being or becoming
succumbed (suh KUMD) *v.*: gave way to superior force; yielded
capacity (kuh PASS ih tee) *n.*: actual or potential ability
haven (HAY vun) *n.*: any place of shelter and safety
deflated (dih FLAYT ed) *v.*: released the air or gas from something

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LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **48. Suspense:** Readers will wonder how they'll survive on this island.
- ▶ **49. Relief:** Some relief amidst all the suspense and chaos.
- ▶ **50. Suspense:** The fate of yet another animal is in question.
- ▶ **51. Theme:** The beginning of the tremendous help the Helpers and the animals receive.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Where do all the survivors eventually gather?

A. On an island of high ground away from the mainland.

Q. Which of Helper's favorite animals is missing? Why is this especially disappointing to him?

A. Bullfrog, the water buffalo. He's especially sad because he thought if anyone could survive, it would be Bullfrog.

ANALYTICAL

Q. What is remarkable about the help the Helpers receive?

A. Answers will vary. People come from everywhere to help and go to great lengths. Without the help, they would have really been in trouble, for the winds were getting extremely cold. The supplies may have saved them.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Three girls from the affection-training school come by train to retrieve snakes that would die in the cold if not taken to a warmer location, and other animals ride to safety in the coal car.

- In the middle of the night, cries from the lost water buffalo awaken everyone as he unsuccessfully struggles to climb the embankment onto dry land.

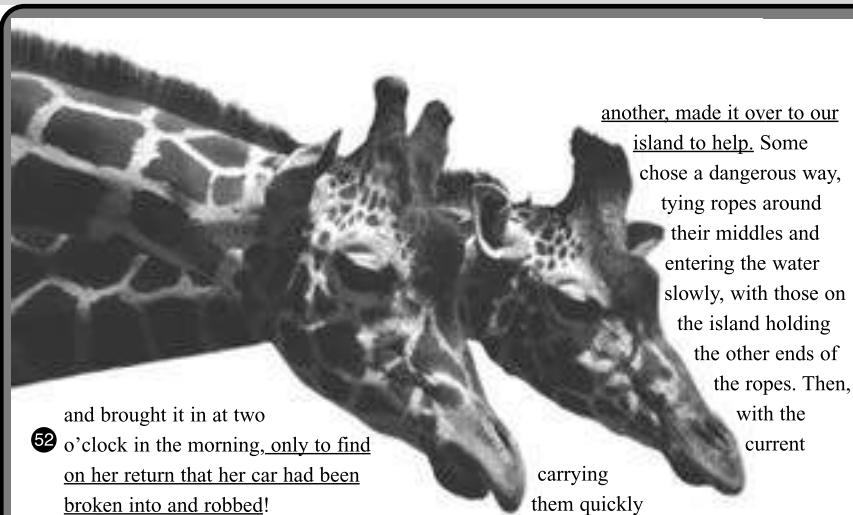
LITERARY COMPONENTS

► **52. Perspective:** To put life into its true perspective, the author notes that, unfortunately, there is a rotten apple in every barrel.

► **53. Cause and effect:** Another example.

► **54. Theme:** This statement shows how truly giving most of the people in the area are.

► **55. Auditory imagery:** This image adds to the suspense.



and brought it in at two
52 o'clock in the morning, only to find
on her return that her car had been
broken into and robbed!

Then a train engine came down the track to help (just an engine—no cars). Three girls from the affection-training school volunteered to rescue the snakes. The girls climbed onto the cowcatcher¹⁵ on the front of the engine. We then wrapped about thirty feet of pythons and boa constrictors around their shoulders and told them where to take the snakes once they were on the other side. (There was, of course, no more electricity in the reptile and nursery area, and **53** unless we could get the reptiles to some heat, they would surely die.) Goats, aoudads,¹⁶ and llamas all rode in the coal bin behind the engine. I'll never forget the look on one girl's face as the engine pulled out and a python crawled through her hair.

54 By four the next morning, some
twenty people had, by one method or

another, made it over to our
island to help. Some
chose a dangerous way,
tying ropes around
their middles and
entering the water
slowly, with those on
the island holding
the other ends of
the ropes. Then,
with the
current

carrying
them quickly

downstream, they would look for a logjam or boulder to stop them so they could make their way to where we were.

I was having some coffee in the watchmen's trailer when **55** the scream of an animal shattered the night. I dashed out to find a small group of people huddled together, trying to shine their flashlights on the animal who was out there in the dark, desperately struggling in the raging water. It had succeeded in swimming out of the turbulence in the middle of the stream, but the sides of the river were too slippery for it to get a foothold and climb to safety. In the dark, I couldn't make out which animal

15. Trains were once equipped with *cowcatchers*, or triangular frames, at the front of the locomotive to clear the tracks of obstructions.

16. An *aoudad* (AH oo DAD) is a wild sheep with a long fringe of hair on the throat, chest, and forelegs. It also is called a Barbary sheep.

WORD BANK

turbulence (TER byuh lentz) *n.*: violent commotion or disturbance

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GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Why is it so important for the volunteers to take the snakes?

A. The snakes would die without heat.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Toni calls to Ralph when she finds one of the “Beverly Hills” cages lodged in a tree trunk.
- The cage contains Rona and Sheba, to the delight and great relief of the Helpers.
- On the third day the rain stops, giving the Helpers time to assess the damage.

56 it was. Then I heard it: “Hi! Hi!” It was a call of desperation from Bullfrog, the buffalo, as he fought for his life. There was nothing we could do to help him, and his “Hi’s” trailed down the dark, black abyss, fading as he was carried away around the bend.

Then Toni screamed at me in the dark, “Ralph, over here!” I fought my way through a maze of debris and water and burst into a clearing. There was Toni, holding a flashlight on—Io and behold—a big steel cage from Beverly Hills! It had been washed downstream and was lodged in the trunk of a toppled tree. It was still upright, but its back was facing us, and we couldn’t see inside. We waded out to the cage. Toni kept calling, “Sheba, Rona, are

57 you there? Please answer!” Our hearts were beating fast, and Toni was crying.

Hoping against hope that the wolves were still alive, we rounded the corner, half swimming, half falling. Then we eased up to the front of the cage and looked straight into two sets of the most beautiful eyes I’d

58 ever seen. Rona and Sheba had survived! They practically jumped out of their skins when they saw us, as though to say, “Is it really *you*?” Toni had her key, and we unlocked the door. Both wolves fell all over us, knocking us into the water. They couldn’t seem to stop licking our faces and whimpering. Thank G-d, at least *they* were safe!

The rain finally let up on the morning of the third day. The sun came out, and at last we had time to stop, look around, and assess the damage. It was devastating, and heartrending.

Most of the animals had been let out of their cages and had totally disappeared, including Judy, Clarence, Pajama Tops, the zebra, and Raunchy, our star jaguar. We knew a few others had definitely drowned. Both rhinos were missing, and so were the hippos. Our beloved Gentle Ben had been washed away, along with hundreds of other animals.



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WORD BANK

assess (uh SESS) v.: determine the amount of
devastating (DEV uh sthayt ing) v.:
overwhelming; heartbreaking

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **56. Suspense; Possible relief:** One of his beloved animals is found, but then lost again.
- ▶ **57. Suspense; Excitement:** Tension rises as the reader awaits the fate of Rona and Sheba.
- ▶ **58. Relief:** At least one set of animals is okay.
- ▶ **59. Relief:** As the rain stops, both reader and characters can rest for a moment.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

- Q. What great discovery does Toni make?**
A. She finds the cage holding Sheba and Rona.
- Q. Although many animals are still missing, who is safe?**
A. Sheba and Rona.

ANALYTICAL

- Q. Where in the story do we suddenly get relief, but lose it again?**
A. Helfer hears the “Hi” of Bullfrog, so we think he might be okay, but then he can’t make it to shore. He’s carried away, and we don’t know what will become of him.
- Q. What do you imagine went through Ralph Helfer’s heart and mind when the rain finally stopped and he had time to look around?**
A. Answers will vary.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Helfer finds out that Toni has been able to save all the animals in the nursery.
- As the Helfers hike to a ridge above the railroad track, they see an amazing sight: Zamba, the lion,

as well as animals of all species from the ranch lie together under a tree on dry land, seemingly waiting for their trainer's next move. This sight confirms in his mind the power of affection training.

- Toni and Ralph lead the animals down to where the others are, and with the help of neighbors, friends, and animal lovers, work to create temporary housing for the animals.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **60. Theme:** More testament to the impact of affection training.
- ▶ **61. Auditory imagery:** Shows the initial sounds after the rain subsides.
- ▶ **62. Theme:** All can be lost so quickly.
- ▶ **63. Biblical imagery; Theme:** An image of “the lion and the lamb” attests to the strength of gentleness.
- ▶ **64. Visual imagery; Relief:** Beautiful and moving image of peace and affection. Relief that so many of the animals have been found. It appears that when man is good and kind, all of creation is at peace.
- ▶ **65. Theme:** The generosity of humankind.

I was sitting there looking at the wreckage when somebody put a cup of hot chocolate in my hand. It was Toni. She stood before me, as exhausted as I was, clothes torn and wet, hair astray, cold and shivering. Earlier, she had managed to make her way to the Africa U.S.A. nursery, where all of the baby animals were **60** quartered. Without exception, the babies had all followed her to safety. Not one baby animal had been lost.

The hot liquid felt good going down. The sun was just topping the **61** cottonwoods.¹⁷ The river had subsided. All was quiet, except for an occasional animal noise: a yelp, a growl, a snort. All of the animals were happy to see the sun, to feel its warmth.

62 Toni and I felt only the heavy, leaden feeling of loss. Ten years were, literally, down the drain. We had just signed a contract with Universal Studios to open our beautiful ranch to their tours; this would now be impossible. A million dollars was gone, maybe more. But what was far worse was the loss of some of our beloved animals.

We hiked to a ridge above the railroad track. Something caught my eye, and as we came near an outcrop of trees where we could have a better view, we looked over. There, on top of a nearby hill, we saw an

63 incredible sight. Lying under the tree was

Zamba, and at his feet, resting, were a multitude of animals. Deer, bears, tigers, llamas, all lying together peacefully. The animals must have fought their way clear of the treacherous waters and, together, climbed the hill, slept, and then dried off in the morning sun. They hadn't run away. In fact, they seemed to be waiting for our next move. It was as though G-d had caused the flood to make me realize how powerful affection training is, how deep it had gone. The lamb could truly lie down with the lion, without fear, and could do it by choice!

We called Zam over to us and smothered him with hugs and kisses. **64** As we climbed down to the ranch, the other animals joined us. Camels, giraffes, eland¹⁸—all came along as we wound our way down.

So many people were there at the ranch! We were once again connected with the rest of the world. Exhausted, wet, wonderful people—true animal lovers. They had come from everywhere. Some were employees, some friends, some **65** strangers. All greeted us as we came down the hill. Their faces expressed hope and love. They cared . . . and it showed.

17. *Cottonwoods* are tall poplar trees that derive their name from the cottony tufts on their seeds.
18. An *eland* (EE lund) is an antelope with long, twisted horns.

WORD BANK

subsided (sub SYD ed) *v.*: sank to a lower level; became quiet, less active, or less violent
multitude (MULL tuh tood) *n.*: a large number of something
treacherous (TRECH uh rus) *adj.*: dangerous

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GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Despite the million or more dollars in property and work that were gone, what was even more devastating to the Helfers?

A. The loss of their beloved animals.

Q. What tremendous sight catches Helfer's eye on the hilltop?

A. He sees Zamba and “a multitude” of animals at his feet.

ANALYTICAL

Q. What images come to mind when you picture “the lion lying down with the lamb”?

A. Answers will vary. Most will probably have images of true peace, or think about great conflict being resolved. The idea of a strong gentleness may also come to mind.

Q. How does Helfer build suspense during this part of the story?

A. Answers will vary.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- Another wonderful surprise comes when Bullfrog, the water buffalo, shows up alive and well.
- They receive help in their cleanup effort from local animal lovers and friends, as well as from the Humane Society, Fish and Game, Animal Regulation, and the SPCA.

We took the animals one by one and fed, cleaned, and housed them as best we could.

“Ralph, come quickly!” screamed a voice. “He made it, he made it! *He’s alive!*”

“Who, who?” I screamed, and was met by a resounding “Hi, Hi!” From around the corner came Bullfrog—disheveled¹⁹ and muddy, but alive!

66 “Hi, hi!”

Yes, *hi*, you big, lovable . . . hi! hi!

67 We began searching for the animals that were still lost. The ranch was a network of people and animals working together on the massive cleanup effort.

Animals were straining to pull big trucks out of the water and muck. Bakery trucks were coming by with stale bread for the elephants. Farmers loaned us their skip loaders²⁰ to round up the hippos and rhinos. (One hippo fell in love with the skip-loader bucket and coyly²¹ followed it home!) Charley and Madeline Franks, two loyal helpers, kept hot chili coming and must have dished out hundreds of meals. People from the Humane Society, Fish and Game, Animal Regulation, and the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) all helped to comfort and tend the animals.

Everyone was busy constructing makeshift cages. The medical-lab trailer was pulled out of the mud. The nursery

building and all of its kitchen storage area had been completely submerged, and some of it had been washed away. However, what could be salvaged was taken up to the island for immediate use.

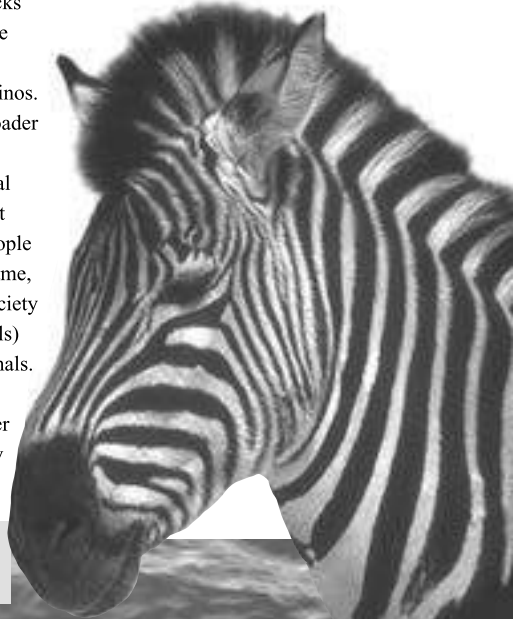
68 Outside the ranch, the animals began turning up everywhere. Elephants showed up in people’s backyards. Eagles sat in the limbs of trees. Llamas and guanacos²² cruised the local restaurants and were seen

19. To be *disheveled* (dish EV uld) is to be unkempt, untidy, or messy.

20. A *skip loader* is a light tractor with both a compartment for front-loading and a backhoe for digging.

21. To be *coy* is to show only some of the affection that one feels and to hide the rest, either out of shyness or insincerity.

22. *Guanacos* (gwah NAHK oz) are relatives of the llama, the alpaca, and the camel.



The Flood ~ 491

WORD BANK **makeshift** (MAYK shift)
n.: a temporary substitute for something

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

Q. Where did some of the animals begin turning up?

A. They showed up in people’s backyards, in the limbs of trees, near restaurants, and in parking lots.

ANALYTICAL

Q. In all this trauma, what one funny visual image does Helfer share?

A. His hippo falls in love with a skip-loader bucket! It must look like a hippo.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

► **66. Relief; Auditory imagery; Humor:** These sounds signify that Bullfrog the water buffalo is alive. Finally, a bit of lightheartedness.

► **67. Theme:** Again, the point that when people selflessly work together for a good cause, much can be achieved.

► **68. Relief:** More animals are found safe.

SUMMING UP THE PLOT

- While cleanup and reconstruction takes place on the ranch, animals from the ranch turn up all over the community, with no difficulty between animals and people.
- Most of their dozens of alligators perished in the flood, their bodies being discovered months later as the waters subside.
- Only nine others, five of which had not been affection trained, perished, and only one animal, Gentle Ben, is unaccounted for.

LITERARY COMPONENTS

- ▶ **69. Theme:** Without affection training, this may not have been possible.
- ▶ **70. Theme:** Although many animals are saved, there are casualties.
- ▶ **71. Theme:** Aside from the alligators, the majority of animals lost had not been affection trained.
- ▶ **72. Suspense:** Gentle Ben's location is still unknown.
- ▶ **73. Theme:** Determination and selflessness are illustrated in his continued struggle despite illness.
- ▶ **74. Relief:** The last of the animals is found.
- ▶ **75. Imagery; Symbolism:** Helfer closes the essay with a rainbow, a symbol of hope. It represents hope that the flood will not recur, and that it is time for rebuilding and renewal.

- Helfer acquires walking pneumonia, but has no time to rest with all the work needed to be done on the ranch.
- As Helfer sits resting on a rock, too exhausted and sick to give orders or work any more, Toni and all those helping bring Gentle Ben to him. The big bear had been found two miles down the canyon.

69 in parking lots. There was no difficulty between animals and people.

We had had dozens of alligators, some weighing two hundred to three hundred pounds. The whole pen had been hit by the water; we lost most of them because the water was ice-cold, and it battered and beat them. For seven months afterward we'd read in the paper that the bodies of alligators were being found everywhere, up to forty-five miles away. There were helicopter and airplane photos of alligators that had been killed, their bodies lying in the sand as the water subsided.

71 Of 1,500 other animals, only nine had drowned. Five of these were animals that had not been affection-trained.

Only one animal remained lost and unaccounted for, and that was old Gentle Ben. I had last seen him being swept

72 sideways down the river. We didn't have much hope for him.

I was starting to feel the full shock of everything that had happened. True, by some miracle most of the animals were safe, but other losses had been enormous. As the emergency lessened and mopping-up²³ operations took over, I felt worse and worse. The shakes set in, and then I

73 developed a high fever. The doctors said it was a walking pneumonia, and that rest, good food, and warmth were in order. But there were still too many things to do—now was not the time to stop. I did,

however, need to find a place to sit down and relax for a while.

As I sat on a log, my body trembled with shock as well as illness. In looking over the debris, it seemed to me that everything I had worked for was gone. The emotional pain, the sheer physical exhaustion, and the pneumonia had overloaded me. I just couldn't handle any more. I had no more tears, no pain of any kind. I was numb. I sat in the middle of the chaos with an old blanket wrapped around me, unmoving, unable to give any more orders.

I had closed my eyes and was drifting off to sleep when something warm and wet on my face woke me up. **74** I opened my eyes and saw Ben. Gentle Ben had come home! I hugged him and cried like a big kid. I turned to get up to tell everyone, but I didn't have to. They were all there. Toni, joined by the rest, had brought him to me. He'd been found two miles down the canyon, mud-covered and a few pounds lighter, but safe! Tears were in everybody's eyes—and if you looked closely, it seemed that even old Ben had a few.

75 A beautiful rainbow arched its brilliant colors across the ravaged countryside, then was gone.

23. In a situation where a lot of damage has been done, repairing the damage is a big job. The task of applying the finishing touches needed to bring the situation back to normal is called *mopping up*.

GUIDING THE READING

LITERAL

- Q. How far away were alligator bodies found?**
A. Up to forty-five miles away.
- Q. What was the best surprise of all?**
A. Gentle Ben had made it home.

ANALYTICAL

- Q. Why do you think there were no problems between animals and people as the animals were discovered around town?**
A. Probably because they had been trained with affection and weren't afraid of people.
- Q. What might have been the cause of Helfer's pneumonia?**
A. Being in the rain for so many hours, in addition to the exhaustion of working so hard to save all the animals lowered Helfer's resistance.

- Q. What does the rainbow at the end symbolize?**
A. Answers will vary, but most will say "hope," "a promise," or "renewal."



The Flood ~ 493

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Student answers will vary. Encourage them to explain their responses.

QUICK REVIEW

1. In Soledad Canyon in California along the banks of the Santa Clarita stream, about 30 miles north of Los Angeles.
2. He notices that the little narrow stream next to the barn has swollen.
3. It had rained thirty inches over the course of a few weeks and the soil was saturated. When the flood-gates to the dam above the ranch were opened, the wet soil couldn't absorb the water.
4. The animals in the nursery were brought to safety without any losses, and the alligators suffered the greatest loss. Almost all perished from the cold water and being battered and beaten around in it.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

RALPH HELFER was born in 1931. He began his career as a stuntman, wrestling with lions, tigers, and bears. Gradually, he developed a method of affection training, using patience, respect, and affection to train animals to perform. For many years, he owned and operated the largest animal rental company in the world. Mr. Helfer now spends most of his time in Kenya, where he leads photography safaris and works with organizations that protect animals in the wild.

Studying the Selection

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

What moment in the story was most exciting for you?

QUICK REVIEW

1. Where was Ralph Helfer's ranch located?
2. Why is Mr. Helfer a little concerned after he leaves the rhinos?
3. What causes the flood?
4. Which group of animals is brought to safety with fewest losses? Which group of animals suffers the greatest losses?



494 ~ Unit 3

FOCUS

1. Think of the most emotional event you have experienced. Close your eyes and move through the experience in your mind's eye. Now create a table with five columns. Label each column with one of the five senses: Sight, Sound, Taste, Touch, and Smell. Remember that touch refers to any physical sensation. Now, go back to your memory. Give yourself as much time as you need to make your list of images.
2. Use the event you remembered for #1. From that memory choose two incidents that are examples of cause and effect. Describe the events and how they are linked.
3. Work with a partner to come up with a setting that could be part of a conflict. A massive mudslide and a volcanic eruption are two good examples. Now write a three-paragraph narrative using your setting.

CREATING AND WRITING

1. Natural disasters are common. Some examples are earthquakes, tornadoes, forest fires, volcanic eruptions, and tidal waves. Choose one and write a one-page report about it.
2. Find out about animal training. Information is available at the library, or you can request help from a veterinarian, a local chapter of the Humane Society or Animal Protective League, or a local nature center. Here are some questions to ask: Which animals are most easily trained? Which are most difficult to train? Which animals may benefit from training? Which animals may suffer? Which animals should simply be left alone in the wild? Present your findings to the class in an oral report.
3. Choose an image from Ralph Helfer's description of the flood and create a drawing of the scene.

FOCUS

1. This is a fun activity to do with the entire class with you setting the timer. Students are often amazed at how much they remember when they break down the senses in this fashion. Even if writing about emotional experiences is difficult, encourage the students because the senses are heightened at those times, and they'll experience better recall.
2. Use the information provided in the skills portion of "Focusing on the Literary Components" to guide the students with this activity.
3. Writing stories together can be very stimulating and fun. Allow students to share their work.

CREATING AND WRITING

1. This is a great library activity. Students will find much information in encyclopedias or books. If students don't have access to a library, go to your local library and take out books on natural disasters that the students can use in the classroom.
2. Students will need help getting phone numbers for this activity. They will learn a lot from experts and a lot about interviewing. Have them prepare their questions ahead of time and call to set a time for a telephone interview. If you live in an area near a water theme park, such as Sea World, consider this another resource. The students will find someone willing to give them information, particularly if they know it's for a school assignment. Consider teaming students up so that several can get the information at one time, thereby reducing the time any one source will spend interviewing.
3. Display the students' drawings around the classroom.